

I. Listing of Claims

1. (Previously Presented) A seat belt retractor for a motor vehicle seat belt restraint system for storing seat belt webbing and having a retractor locking device responsive to inertial loads acting on the vehicle, the retractor comprising a force limiter to permit the restricted paying out of the seat belt webbing with the absorption of energy, the force limiter providing a first relatively high energy absorbing level and a second relatively low energy absorbing level, a control mechanism operable to select between the energy absorbing levels in response to a crash related electric signal, the control mechanism initially selecting the first energy level upon locking of the retractor by the locking device and being responsive to relative movement between two components of the retractor caused by an initial belt force less than a predetermined force to permit selection of the second energy level, and further being responsive to the relative movement between the components of the retractor caused by an initial belt force in excess of the predetermined force, to inhibit the effective selection of the second energy absorbing level, thereby maintaining the first energy level.

2. Previously Cancelled.

3. Previously Cancelled.

4. (Previously Presented) A seat belt retractor according to Claim 1 wherein the two components of the retractor are formed by a spindle within the retractor having a first part of the spindle being adapted to be locked from rotating by the locking

device, a second part of the spindle having the seat belt wound around it, the second part of the spindle movable relative to the first part causing the relative movement when the initial belt force in excess of the predetermined force is applied.

5. (Previously Presented) A seat belt retractor according to Claim 4 wherein the second part of the spindle is connected to the first part of the spindle by means of an energy absorbing torsion bar, the energy absorbing torsion bar having two sections, a first section being operative to provide the first relatively high energy absorbing level and a second section being operative to provide the second relatively low energy absorbing level.

6. (Previously Presented) A seat belt retractor according to Claim 5 wherein the control mechanism incorporates a locking element and an inhibiting element, the inhibiting element engaging part of the torsion bar between the first and the second sections thereof, the locking element initially engaging part of the inhibiting element and the second part of the spindle to secure the inhibiting element to the second part of the spindle, the locking element being moveable to a release position through the control mechanism in which the locking element does not secure the inhibiting element to the second part of the spindle.

7. (Previously Presented) A seat belt retractor according to Claim 6 wherein the locking element is a radially moveable locking element, the locking element initially being retained in an engaged position by means of a blocking element, the control mechanism being configured to move the blocking element and the locking element to a release position in response to the crash related electric signal.

8. (Previously Presented) A seat belt retractor according to Claim 7 wherein the blocking element is in the form of a ring.

9. (Previously Presented) A seat belt retractor according to Claim 7 wherein the blocking element is moveable in response to the generation of gas by a pyrotechnic squib.

10. (Withdrawn) A seat belt retractor according to Claim 9 wherein the pyrotechnic squib is positioned to direct gas against the blocking member urging the blocking element toward the relative position.

11. (Previously Presented) A seat belt retractor according to Claim 9 further comprising a control element, the squib being positioned to direct gas to the control element to move the control element so that the movement of the control element moves the blocking element to the release position.

12. (Withdrawn) A seat belt retractor according to Claim 9 wherein the pyrotechnic squib is associated with at least one first gas duct formed in the first part of the spindle and at least one second gas duct in the second part of the spindle, the first and second gas ducts initially being co-aligned, so that a flow of gas may flow through both of the gas ducts to cause movement of the blocking element, the first part of the spindle being moveable relative to the second part of the spindle in response to the initial belt force in excess of a predetermined value, thus off-setting

the gas flow ducts to prevent the flow of gas from moving the blocking element to the release position.

13. (Withdrawn) A seat belt retractor according to Claim 12 wherein there are a plurality of the first gas ducts in the first part of the spindle and a corresponding plurality of the second gas flow ducts in the second part of the spindle.

14. (Withdrawn) A seat belt retractor according to Claim 7 wherein the blocking element is located adjacent a stop, the blocking element in a first orientation being moveable past the stop, the blocking element, in any other orientation from the first orientation, not being moveable past the stop, the orientation of the blocking element being responsive to the relative displacement between the first and second parts of the spindle.

15. (Withdrawn) A seat belt retractor according to Claim 14 wherein the blocking element is in the form of a ring, the ring being provided with at least one inwardly directed finger, the finger being received within an axially extending groove formed in an outer region of the second part of the spindle.

16. (Withdrawn) A seat belt retractor according to Claim 14 wherein the stop is formed on the first part of the spindle.

17. (Withdrawn) A seat belt retractor according to Claim 14 wherein two of the stops are provided at diametrically opposed positions, each of a predetermined

configuration, and a ring shaped blocking element is provided with two cut outs of shape and configuration corresponding to the stops.

18. (Previously Presented) A seat belt retractor according to any one of Claim 4 wherein wires are provided to supply the electric signal, a part of at least a position of the wire extending from the first part of the spindle to the second part of the spindle, the part of the wire being configured to be broken upon the relative movement of the second part of the spindle relative to the first part.

19. (Previously Presented) A seat belt retractor according to Claim 6 wherein the inhibiting element is provided with a deformable portion which is configured to be deformed in response to the relative movement of the second part of the spindle to a first part of the spindle, the deformable part being positioned to co-operate with a correspondingly configured part of the second part of the spindle, to engage the deformable part with the second part of the spindle so as to inhibit effective selection of the one of the second energy level.

20. (Withdrawn) A seat belt retractor according to Claim 19 wherein the deformable part is in the form of a deformable finger, the finger being deformed into a shaped recess provided within the second part of the spindle.